



INVOLVING RESIDENTS POLICY

1. **Policy Statement**

Redland is committed to involving residents in decisions about all the services we provide. We will enable residents to be involved in a range of ways with the principal objective of improving the services we provide.

2. **Introduction**

This document sets out our principles in involving residents and how we will apply those principles to ensure that objectives are met. We believe that the involvement of residents has three strands, the provision of information, consultation with residents, and enabling residents to participate in our decision making processes.

The principal objective of this policy, the improvement of service delivery, is evidenced in a number of ways

- services which customers judge to be better
- providing better access to services
- services which provide better value for money, or are more efficient
- producing more effective resident involvement
- a better quality of life for individuals and communities

The term 'residents' means tenants, and home owners who receive a service from Redland through a lease or transfer covenant. Generally, the document applies to all residents: where we use the word 'tenant' this applies to secure and assured tenants and shared ownership leaseholders. The term 'owner' means 100% leasehold and freehold owners on our estates.

3. **Principles**

We consider the provision of information a vital stage in the involvement process, enabling residents to understand how our policies and procedures affect them and how they might wish to become involved in decision making.

We seek to provide good quality information, in plain language and a range of formats, on all aspects of our services and on our relevant policies and procedures.

We will consult residents when considering any changes to the services residents receive, to our management policy or practice or when we are considering any major works.

We will take full account of the views of residents before decisions are made.

We will advise residents of the outcomes of consultation.

We will ensure that residents are able to participate in decisions about the management of their homes and the provision of services.

We will do so through an effective resident involvement structure, agreed with residents, which will reflect the diversity of residents and their aspirations. The structure will enable involvement in a range of ways, with each way having a clear purpose and objective.

We will agree with residents a formal partnership document which will set out how residents can be involved across a range of key services.

We will set objectives for resident involvement, and will measure and report the impact residents have had on the services.

We will publicise the different ways in which residents can be involved and encourage engagement at an appropriate level.

We will adequately resource and give practical support to the resident involvement structure and to building the capability of the structure and of individual residents.

We will ensure that residents have equal opportunities to take part in involvement and will take active steps to engage with under represented and vulnerable groups.

We are committed to the principles of the Housing Corporation document "People First: Delivering Change through Involvement" and believe that the principles of this document reflect that commitment.

4. Application

Information

We will produce a regular newsletter, using a tenants' editorial group, and sent to all tenants. A newsletter for owners will be produced in a form considered appropriate by owners.

An annual performance report will be produced annually and sent to all tenants. This will report Redland's performance against targets in a range of services, provide feedback on levels of satisfaction with the service, and report how tenants have influenced that service delivery.

We will provide handbooks for tenants and owners, updated regularly and achieving Plain English Crystal Mark standard.

We will produce a series of leaflets for tenants and owners about our services, updated regularly and achieving Plain English Crystal Mark standard.

We will make key information available in different languages and formats, and we will know what needs our residents have so that information can be provided in a way that meets those needs.

Where a housing management service is provided to Redland residents by an agency, we will require the agent concerned to provide information to the above standard.

We will use information we hold about residents to tailor our involvement structures to meet individual needs and to target underrepresented or minority groups.

Consultation

We will consult residents using a range of methods appropriate to circumstances.

Where proposals affect individual developments, we will use a range of ways to consult residents, from a letter to each affected resident asking for comments to – in more complex matters – holding meetings or visiting residents at home.

We will consult on proposed changes to policy and procedure through mechanisms such as our residents' panel, which enables large numbers of residents to comment on proposals.

An important way of consulting and getting feedback on services, and establishing issues which residents consider important, is to carry out satisfaction surveys. We will carry out a "status" survey at least once every three years, as well as local surveys relating to individual service areas such as repairs, lettings and new developments.

We view complaints as another form of satisfaction feedback and we will monitor the nature of both informal and formal complaints.

We will report outcomes of satisfaction surveys to those involved, and will also report these to service area focus groups with a view to improving service delivery.

We will carry out formal consultation in accordance with sections 18 to 30 of the landlord and tenant Act 1985 where any major works affect service charge payers.

Where the management of our housing is carried out by an agent, we will require that agent to consult residents following the principles above.

We will monitor responses to satisfaction surveys to ensure that the views of minority groups are represented.

Participation

We will reserve three places on our governing Board for resident members: applications will be invited from all residents, candidates selected by our Redland Residents Committee and a recommendation for appointment made to the Board. We will provide training and support to both prospective and current resident Board members.

We will maintain and support a strategic body (the Redland Residents Committee) set up and run by residents to manage and give direction to resident involvement at Redland. Membership is open to all residents and officers are elected by the membership.

Redland will support and recognise properly constituted residents' associations. We will positively encourage the formation of associations, assisting with setup grants and with reasonable facilities for meetings and administration.

We will support and administer democratically elected neighbourhood voices to represent individual sites, particularly encouraging these where no residents' associations exist. We will administer the election process and will provide training and support to elected voices

A series of focus groups, mandated by and reporting to the Redland Residents Committee, will consider individual service areas. Terms of reference will include involvement in policy reviews, setting standards and monitoring performance, receiving feedback from satisfaction surveys and complaints and considering actions.

The intention of the above is to provide residents with a range of options for involvement. We want residents to be able to participate in strategic issues, local issues, policy and procedure, and specific service areas, and to do so using a range of mechanisms from formal meetings to community action. The range is not intended to be hierarchical, and each group will have its own terms of reference and objectives.

Where the management of our housing is undertaken by agents, we will require those agents to encourage and promote effective resident participation.

Partnership Agreement

Our Partnership Agreement, drawn up with residents, affirms the commitments of this policy to residents. It sets out a practical framework for involvement and it shows how residents can be involved in all those service areas which residents themselves consider key.

We will produce the Partnership Agreement in plain English and will publicise it to all residents.

Every year we will produce, with the Redland Residents Committee, a resident involvement statement which will review the effectiveness of the Partnership Agreement, looking at whether its objectives and commitments are being met. The statement will include an impact assessment which will demonstrate how residents have made a difference to Redland's services through the agreement. The statement will also include an action plan, setting out what we plan to achieve in the future.

We will send a summary of the statement, impact assessment and action plan to all residents as part of our annual performance report.

5. Community Development

A key objective of resident involvement is to support and develop neighbourhoods and communities.

Within the context of this policy we seek to achieve this through support to neighbourhood groups such as residents' associations and neighbourhood voices, and through support to individual events such as our annual tenants' day.

A separate community development policy, and associated procedures, explains how we determine objectives and priorities, and how we involve residents, in specific community development projects.

6. Resources for Resident Involvement

We will commit sufficient resources to ensure the effectiveness of this policy.

We will provide those resources in a range of ways:-

- Dedicating staff resources to involving residents
- Offering financial support to resident groups and events
- Organising training and other capacity building measures, to ensure that residents are equipped to participate effectively at whatever level they choose
- Buying in specialist external support, such as the tenant participation advisory service, or the Plain English Campaign to meet the above objectives
- Providing administrative and practical support to resident groups

7 Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed at least once every three years by the Redland Residents Committee and the Association's Board.

Through the Partnership Agreement outcomes, the effectiveness of this policy is reviewed annually.

This policy is effective from: December 2007
This policy will be reviewed by: December 2010
The lead officer is: Head of Customer Services
The responsible focus group is: Redland Residents Committee